

## **Appendix C – Minutes of meetings with Staff, Governors and School Council**

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## 1. Consultation meeting with staff of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen

14<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### Present

### Staff:

A Elias	E Wyn	M Williams
A Jones	G James	N Bleddyn-Jones
A Jones	G Phillips	N Jones
A Jones	H ap Robert	N Zjalik
A Thomas	I Thomas	P Kenny
A Williams	J Price	R Law
C Lloyd-Williams	L Evans	S Rees-Griffiths
C Morgans	M Evans	S Roberts
D Brown	M Griffiths	T Owen
D Jones	M Jones	T Rowlands
E Holt	M Lewis	

### Officers:

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead, Schools Service  
Huw Foster Evans, Education Improvement Consultant  
Sarah Astley, Schools Transformation and Welsh-medium Education Programme Manager  
Huw Rowlands, Programme Officer, Schools Transformation  
Sarah Christoforou, Powys Human Resources  
Yan James, Challenge Adviser

Dafydd Jones, Headteacher of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Powys officials.

Geraint Rees introduced himself and made it clear that the intention was to use both the Welsh and English languages in the meeting, and parties were welcome to use whichever language they preferred. Huw Foster Evans would be available to answer questions especially in relation to Welsh-medium education and bilingualism.

Geraint Rees said that he hoped to have opinions on how Powys should proceed to try and create an entitlement for every learner to be entirely versatile in both English and Welsh.

It was explained that the consultation is a statutory process proposing to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen from its current dual-stream to Welsh-medium.

Sarah Astley gave a presentation giving an overview of the background and history of the proposal. It was explained that Estyn inspected Powys County Council's Education services in summer 2019 and made a number of recommendations. This resulted in Powys County Council implementing a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys, including the objective of creating and developing Welsh-medium education in the County and to improve access to Welsh-medium education across all key stages within Powys.

In November 2020, Powys County Council's Cabinet gave approval for a consultation to be carried out in respect of proposals to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen.

Those in attendance were reminded of the proposal:

"To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen to Welsh-medium. This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022."

Consultation started on 8 December 2020 and will continue until 26 January 2021.

All information in relation to the consultation is available on the Council's website and paper copies can be sent out if required. A comprehensive consultation document for the proposal has been drafted, which explains the reasoning for the proposal. The various options in relation to responding to the consultation were then explained, being via the Council's website, by email to Powys County Council or by post to County Hall.

An overview was then given on the next steps ahead. Once the consultation is complete, the responses that have been received will be analysed, and a report will be prepared summarising the responses. The report will be published and considered by the Council's Cabinet, who will decide whether or not to proceed with the process. If they decide not to proceed with the proposal, then that will be the end of the matter. However, if they decide to proceed with the proposal, a Statutory Notice will then be issued, to which there is a 28 day objection period. At the end of the objection period, a further report would be prepared outlining any objections received, and Cabinet would consider this report and make a final decision.

The aim is for Cabinet to have made a final decision by the end of the 2021 academic year.

Staff were then invited and encouraged to ask any questions, and the questions asked were as follows:

**Member of staff:** I work at the ALN unit in Ysgol Bro Hyddgen. I see a number of pupils who struggle to learn even through their first language, and I am concerned regarding what support will there be for pupils with emotional, social and behaviour

problems, which are already educational barriers, without having to be educated in a language which is not their mother tongue.

**Geraint Rees:** You will be aware of the range of schools already in Wales who have Welsh language ALN and SEN provision. Evidence shows that ALN and SEN pupils can be taught successfully through the medium of Welsh, with a high percentage making good progress. I would be more than happy to support YBH to be part of the network of Welsh ALN and SEN schools that currently exists. It is not impossible for children with special needs to learn bilingually. It is important that there are discussions regarding this and as far as special needs are concerned, the new campus will have a purpose built SEN unit. Therefore, it works elsewhere and we would need to provide all necessary support for Ysgol Bro Hyddgen to ensure that it works here as well.

**Member of staff:** I agree with you that teaching ALN can work well in Welsh schools all around the country. But it is also true that almost all of those schools you mention also have English provision nearby that parents choose to send them there.

**Geraint Rees:** That is often the case and you're right to say that. One of the things we would need to look at here would be working on a case by case basis with learners, but the hope would be that Bro Hyddgen could provide the framework needed with the support of the local authority including the ALN service which we are boosting quite considerably at the moment.

**Member of staff:** Just to clarify, are you saying that if a child's needs could not be met if educated in the Welsh-medium, they would then be sent out of county or to a school which is quite a distance away. I'm just thinking about the rights of the child to be educated in his or her community.

**Geraint Rees:** You are right to raise the issue regarding the rights of the child, which is a key driver in the new ALN legislation. We will need to apply the new ALN legislation across all of Powys and applying the resource to the child and ensuring that settings can work for children is a key part of that and this would be a key area of work that would need developing if the transition happens. But it's not impossible for children even with significant needs to be operating in bilingual environments and settings, this happens across Wales and beyond Wales where two languages are in common use in the community. The resource needs to be allocated in order to ensure that the child is properly supported, and that's why the discussions regarding the new ALN facility in the new Bro Hyddgen building is also an important one.

**Member of staff:** I teach special needs. If a child needs a speech and language therapist, what happens if no Welsh speaker is available? I have found it difficult to get Welsh language speech and language therapists to help in Powys.

**Geraint Rees:** There is no doubt that we need to improve the ALN provision in Powys, including provision through the medium of Welsh. A new ALN strategy has

recently been agreed in Powys. Recently we sponsored 14 people to attend a postgraduate ALN course at the University of Birmingham, and we did say that we needed bilingual applicants. Another course will start in September 2020 in Birmingham, and the intention is that every year there will be a cohort so that we have expertise, including expertise in the Welsh language throughout the authority. Therefore if you know of anybody suitable, please ask them to put their name forward. It's also important that ALN staff work from the actual school and not from County Hall, as has sometimes been the case in the past.

**Member of staff:** I teach in the primary phase. A lot of people move into the area from England. What provision will there be for them? Will there be immersion – especially for KS2?

**Huw Foster Evans:** I agree that immersion is important and there is a strong track record in Wales of ensuring that immersion works well so that latecomers can participate successfully and benefit from Welsh-medium education. Powys is currently working with Ceredigion to improve immersion provision in Powys.

**Member of Staff:** I work at the secondary campus. Does Powys intend to have some form of marketing or promotional campaign in order to sell the benefits of Welsh and ensure that pupils and their parents understand what Welsh-medium education exactly is?

**Geraint Rees:** Certainly, a number of people misunderstand what Welsh-medium education and ensuring bilingualism for young people is. Many people have thought that dual-stream schools lead to bilingualism, but it is rarely the case that those in the English stream rarely become fully bilingual in Welsh or English. The aspiration is that every learner should become fully competent in both Welsh and English, and that is the intention of Welsh-medium education. It is true to say that Powys has not made much progress in this regard, but Powys is working on this at the moment.

**Sarah Astley:** There is an intention for there to be work by Powys County Council to promote bilingualism, following the launch of the Welsh in Education Strategy in Powys before Christmas. We have been working with Mudiad Meithrin, RHAG, Mentrau Iaith, and an internal group meets weekly. At the moment we are discussing the promotion of the pilot immersion project, and you will soon see this being promoted on social media.

**Geraint Rees:** It would be good if people shared on social media anything they receive from Powys County Council, in relation to bilingualism, immersion and so on, to reach a wider audience.

**Member of staff:** I work on the Secondary Campus. I think you need to set this proposal in its national context. You said at the beginning that Powys is far behind as far as Welsh language education is concerned, and therefore when people are rather afraid to embrace change, it is important to emphasise that Powys is lagging behind

what is happening successfully in other parts of Wales. I think that every educational establishment in Powys needs to educate pupils so that they are completely fluent in both languages. However, to ensure this Powys needs to educate parents so that they see the advantages of having their children being bilingual citizens. Parents and teachers need to have the confidence that any current provisions in Powys in respect of needs of every kind and immersion units are improved. Therefore I welcome the proposal, but emphasise that Powys has a duty to convince everyone of the benefits of Welsh-medium education. It is important that children in Powys have the same opportunities as children in other parts of Wales to be fluent in both Welsh and English.

**Geraint Rees:** I agree that Powys has a duty to support any change. I would also say that the proposal for Ysgol Bro Hyddgen is part of a wider momentum and strategy to ensure that every young person in whatever part of Powys they live can see their education right through to have every opportunity to become fully bilingual. That is something we do not currently have, and there are whole areas of the county where no Welsh-medium primary provision is available.

**Member of staff:** It's important to emphasise when promoting the benefits of bilingualism that Welsh-medium education will not have a negative effect on pupils' standards in the English language. This is an important message that needs to be communicated and promoted.

**Geraint Rees:** I agree, it is part of our vision that bilingualism of quality is what we are striving to achieve. Being proficient in Welsh does not mean being any less proficient in English. We need to make sure that we communicate this with parents and the public.

**Huw Foster-Evans:** Just to add to that last point, it is true to say in relation to Welsh-medium education that it is an expectation and a fact that the development of the English language is totally essential to the success of the Welsh-medium sector. Without this success the sector would not have succeeded as it has. I see that Yan James, Powys County Council is here, and he's shared with us charts of examples of promotional material available. These include references to the success of the Welsh-medium sector in relation to teaching English. Pupils should be in a position to apply at the end of their secondary education for entry to Universities in, Wales, Scotland, England and further afield.

**Member of staff:** I just want to add to what has been said, which is that a designated Welsh-medium school does open the door for pupils to be able to attend Universities worldwide, whatever the language. Also, across all ability ranges, Welsh--medium education opens doors to pupils, including pupils with ALN, where the skill of being able to speak Welsh is of benefit. Therefore, it is not just the most able pupils who can benefit from Welsh-medium education.

**Geraint Rees:** I agree, and in the context of local employment, there is a need all over Wales, for bilingual language skills for a wide range of jobs.

**Member of Staff:** How secure are the jobs of staff members who cannot speak Welsh, and what arrangements will there be in place to help such staff learn Welsh?

**Geraint Rees:** The proposal is that of a phased introduction of any change of language category, starting at the lower end of the school. We need a supportive programme that enables any adult who is working in the school who would like to acquire the Welsh language and to be able to transition neatly with the school for that to happen and there is evidence all around Wales of people who have arrived with little or no Welsh but who have acquired fluency over a period of time. Therefore, we need to support that, but obviously it needs a commitment from both sides for this to succeed, and that's how it's usually best achieved. We'll need to sit around with you to see what are the perceived needs around that, who expresses that interest and how we work that through, but we'll be keen to adopt a supportive approach in getting that done.

**Sarah Christoforou:** Just to say that corporately in Powys we are supporting staff to learn or improve their Welsh, so there is already something set up that would be quite easy to expand with discussions with the staff here, to see what their needs are. So it's not something we would have to start from scratch, there is something already in Powys to expand the Welsh language within the staff group there as well.

**Geraint Rees:** In addition to that, there is a national programme of sabbaticals for people to be able to acquire the skills needed for teaching a subject that links to language acquisition as well, that Welsh Government will support in the teaching profession. So between the corporate Powys, the school itself and the wider community and the area and Welsh Government we hope that we will be able to reach all the buttons.

**Member of staff:** In the past we have had financial promises from Powys, in relation to changes to be made to the school, and those promises have been broken. What assurances can be made in relation to financial provision to support the school in the future?

**Geraint Rees:** It is perhaps true to say that in the past promises have not been kept. However, except for Brecon High School, Ysgol Bro Hyddgen will be the first new secondary campus in Powys for some 30-40 years. Therefore the capital investment of over £40m places the Ysgol Bro Hyddgen at the heart of its community. Powys has a number of old and deteriorating school buildings, and therefore Powys has a challenge to ensure that we have the resources to support every school. We need to develop Welsh language, Post 16 and new campuses for both primary and secondary schools and early years provision and hopefully the resources will stabilise around those.

**Member of staff:** It's good to hear that YBH has a secure future. However, the question I have is in relation to language medium in A level and GCSE. Will all subjects only be available through the medium of Welsh? If you look at Penweddig and Tywyn Secondary schools, some subjects are offered in Welsh or English or taught bilingually. Will every subject be taught in Welsh?

**Geraint Rees:** The proposal is that provision moves towards Welsh-medium and there are a number of areas in Wales where every subject is taught through the medium of Welsh, but there are other areas, where some subjects are taught through the medium of English because of a number of factors; some being local factors. Generally speaking, it is a matter for the local authority and Governing Bodies to decide how to plan matters, but generally, the expectation is that the shift from KS4 and beyond would be for more Welsh-medium teaching. However, it wouldn't be appropriate to answer whether or not every subject would have to be taught through the medium of Welsh, as there are occasions in every school where the need for a specialist in a subject is such that there is need to operate slightly differently.

However, the point is if most children are naturally bilingual it is possible then at least to have a discussion regarding this. If pupils are not naturally bilingual then that is when the problem arises and you cannot have that discussion. Wales is generally moving towards having an increased percentage of subjects taught through the medium of Welsh, even in the sort of schools just mentioned. That is what appears naturally throughout Wales and that is why the shift has happened and also that pupils' bilingualism is strengthened along each step of the way.

**Huw Foster Evans:** I would just like to add I had a chance yesterday to have the privilege of speaking with members of the School Council of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, and one question asked was why was it going to take so long, and having to wait until 2022 before fully changing Ysgol Bro Hyddgen to Welsh-medium were this proposal to proceed. This is a long time, but it is therefore a long time to plan and this is an advantage, but it also has its disadvantages. However, I will agree with Geraint that the trend to offer more courses through the medium of Welsh is in place, but there might well be a need to be flexible, depending on local needs, but to do so from a position of strength and not from a position of weakness.

**Geraint Rees:** The proposal will take time to implement, but it does give planning time. Also, you may have learners in the school who might want more rapid transition, who may have chosen the English stream, but might start thinking that they would prefer to be in the Welsh stream but do not have the language skills to be there. With an immersion unit, it may be that we could facilitate at any part of a pupils' education journey, a transition with proper support. There is evidence in Wales of pupils transitioning quite strongly with no challenges or issues at all to Welsh-medium teaching.



Thank you very much for your time this evening. We will also be meeting with the school governors later this evening and I hope that they will also ask questions as well.

**Dafydd Jones, Headmaster:** Thank you for attending. I believe that it's an exciting prospect for the area and I personally feel that educational standards will improve. I think it's important that staff respond to the consultation. I will share the Powys County Council link with everybody so that they can respond.

## **2. Consultation meeting with governors of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen**

**14<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

### **Present**

#### **Governors:**

Cllr Elwyn Vaughan  
Cllr Michael Williams  
Gwilym Fychan  
Tamsin Davies  
Nia Roberts  
Alun Jones  
Sarah Lewis  
Danielle Armstrong  
Julie Price  
Angharad Behnan  
Rob Goodsell  
Alwyn Jones  
C Lloyd Williams

#### **School Staff:**

Dafydd Jones  
Anwen Pughe-Jones  
Haf ap Robert

#### **Officers:**

Geraint Rees, Strategic Lead, Schools Service  
Huw Foster Evans, Education Improvement Consultant  
Sarah Astley, Programme Manager, Transforming Education

Huw Rowlands, Programme Officer, Transforming Education

Mari Thomas, Finance Manager

Cllr Phyl Davies, Portfolio Holder for Education

Sarah Astley welcomed all to the consultation meeting. All officers introduced themselves. It was explained that there would be a brief presentation with an opportunity for discussion, comments, and questions for the officers.

It was explained that Estyn investigated Powys County Council's Education services in summer 2019 and made a number of recommendations. This resulted in Powys County Council implementing a new Strategy for Transforming Education in Powys,

including the objective of creating and developing Welsh-medium education in the County and to improve access to Welsh-medium education across all key stages within Powys.

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Geraint Rees also explained that there has been an interesting dialogue around dual-stream, Welsh-medium and bilingual terminology. There is generally inconsistent and confused use of the terminology. He explained that in a bilingual school, the ambition is for all pupils to become bilingual by time they leave the school, but at the moment this isn’t the case, in dual-stream schools across Powys, but it is an intention for those in the Welsh-stream. We therefore need to differentiate between the different terms, and the intention with the proposal here is to have pupils who are competent and bilingual in both English and Welsh, by having Ysgol Bro Hyddgen to be a Welsh-medium school.

Governors were then invited and encouraged to ask any questions, and the questions asked were as follows:

**Governor:** Who can respond to the consultation? Is it anyone in Powys, or individuals what would be affected by the proposal, such as parents etc?

**Sarah Astley:** There are no rules on who can respond to the consultations. In the past we have had people respond that live miles away from the area. When we create the consultation responses report, we will do our best to highlight who is responding by reference to the type of respondent, e.g. parent, staff member, organisation and so forth and where they are responding from by reference to a post code.

**Governor:** Thank you. I was asking the question because I know that there are a number of people who are originally from Bro Ddyfi but no longer live here, but would like to respond.

**Cllr Michael Williams:** What I would like to know is how will you be able to respond to parents who are concerned about their children who are first language English and have special educational needs? The other question is how will you explain the difference between dual-stream and bilingualism?

**Geraint Rees:** In response to the first question, it is one of the challenges that Powys has, because its educational system has historically been built around dual-stream. We don't exactly have a model in Powys which we can share with people, and show how Welsh-medium schools work. However, there are a number of schools across Wales which are Welsh-medium. We have schools elsewhere in Wales where 95% of learners have never heard a word of Welsh at home, who will leave school entirely bilingual and who tend to pick up other languages easier too.

It seems to be the case with Bro Hyddgen having changed to be an all-through school, that the parents of younger children have been largely making their own choice in any event by making the choice to send their children to Welsh-medium Education, as last year there were very few who did not choose the Welsh-stream.

The choice is a strange one really, and with time, bilingualism being the norm will hopefully resolve concerns, but it doesn't take away the anxiety people on the streets have now. All I can say is that it works well all over Wales, Europe and beyond for children whatever the language at home, pretty much in the same way as entirely Welsh speaking families in the past have only received education through the medium of English, and have managed to progress well.

The issue around special needs is interesting. Huw and I have been Headteachers of secondary schools where parents were overwhelmingly not Welsh speaking, and where we had special needs pupils.

**Huw Foster Evans:** We need to be aware that parents who have children with special needs will be extremely worried about this proposal. It is a significant change.

It was a privilege for me to meet yesterday evening students from Ysgol Bro Hyddgen and one of the things they mentioned is the time delay in implementing this

proposal. They were concerned about that. However, the advantage of this is that we have more time to plan and get things right.

It is important that we emphasise that the support available throughout Wales for Welsh ALN support has increased. Welsh-medium schools have developed a significant expertise in this area, because there is a lack of provision in many areas. It is important that the expertise is shared with Ysgol Bro Hyddgen and the community. There is a lot of expertise out there. There are a lot of learners from English speaking homes who have significant special needs who have succeeded very very well, and have benefited from having two languages. I have a personal direct experience of that.

**Geraint Rees:** Powys has to be committed to improving Special Needs teaching. This would show that Powys is serious in supporting schools to work through the Welsh language. This is an important agenda now and we need to make sure that we have expertise in English and Welsh for pupils with special needs. Otherwise, this question will be raised again in a few years' time. That's not an option for Powys.

We have at the moment a cohort of some 14 teachers enrolled at the University of Birmingham gaining a postgraduate qualification in additional learning needs. We will be advertising fairly soon for a similar number. Therefore, we hopefully will have increased expertise in special needs as time goes by, including in the Welsh language, as our current expertise is patchy.

We have to deliver so that people who are concerned on the streets will not be concerned in 5 years' time.

**Geraint Rees:** In response to Councillor Williams' second question, that many people do not understand the difference between dual-stream education and bilingualism, Sarah and the team are creating a range of materials which make it clear what the expectation is regarding Welsh-medium education, including raising questions such as will my child if educated in Welsh, can they be educated in a University anywhere in the world and what are their job prospects? When these are published we need them spread far and wide. We need to give clarity around dual-stream offering bilingualism for some, whereas the option that is being put forward for Bro Hyddgen is that each student will become fully bilingual.

**Sarah Astley:** We have been working with other stakeholders such as Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Maldwyn. There is a lot of material already out there, but we need them to be shared and for people to see them, so we encourage you to share any such material when they are available.

**Geraint Rees:** And we do need clarity which is that dual-stream offers bilingualism for some, but monolingualism for others. The option being put forward for Bro Hyddgen is that all learners will be bilingual.

Languages are not caught and you have to learn the language. There is a planned bilingualism for part of the population but not for the other part. The aim here is that every youngster in Machynlleth and the surrounding area will be confident in their use of both the Welsh and English language.

**Cllr Elwyn Vaughan:** It is important to note that there are examples in Powys where there is success from similar situations. I'm talking specifically about Ysgol Dafydd Llwyd where 98% of children come from non-Welsh families, some from the poorest ward in Powys. And there are other examples in Barmouth where 95% of pupils come from non-Welsh language homes, in what is an economically deprived area. Therefore I can't see that Machynlleth should be an exception to this.

**Geraint Rees:** Your facts are correct.

**Governor:** I have the same concerns as Cllr Michael Williams. I understand the complexity and details necessary in the consultation document, but it is also then easy to lose some of the key messages which can then lead to confusion. Perhaps after this stage of the consultation we can have clear messages with real life examples about how it will affect children. The sort of questions you might have from non Welsh-speaking parents is for example, if their children are struggling at school can they take their exams in English?

So, I think messages could be put out much more clearly, at this stage of the consultation and at the next stage. We need real life examples as to how it is going to affect children. The sort of questions you will have is will my child struggle as there is no backup after school. We know the support will be there but not every parent will know this.

As a parent there has been some enthusiasm in relation to Bro Hyddgen from parents outside the County but they would not wish to send their child to an English-medium speaking school nor to a Welsh-medium school. So, I believe we need to get clear messages out to parents.

**Geraint Rees:** I'm sure that there are suitable examples, some in Bro Hyddgen itself, and we need to use those examples.

**Governor:** Can I just ask, have you worked at all with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. I work at Aberystwyth University for the Coleg Cymraeg. At open days students are asking us about learning Welsh because maybe they have had some Welsh at school or have had no Welsh but see the potential of better job opportunities, but by the time they arrive in the University it is often too late. Is there anything being done for students wanting to study through the medium of Welsh at higher Education?

**Huw Foster Evans:** We had a meeting with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol just before Christmas about the same matter and we are working towards developing

more Welsh language provision in further education colleges and in the school sector. Therefore, making sure that children and young people are aware of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, and that there are opportunities is important. I agree with what has been said, and it is something which we are looking at.

**Headmaster:** I totally agree,

**Governor:** One of the questions asked frequently by parents is regarding science subjects. Will pupils have to study such subjects through the medium of Welsh? It's those subjects which make parents afraid, and for example if they go to Liverpool University will they understand what's being taught?

I think in Penweddig there is a choice of languages with some subjects. Is there a percentage of subjects which a bilingual school can offer in the English language? We need to allay the fears and show that there is an option for children.

If the school is working to secure that pupils will have access to both languages, then the idea of fear that they perhaps wouldn't be able to have a certain subject in English or Welsh won't be there. If the school is committing to each pupil being confident in both languages, at this moment in time it may not be an issue worth raising but perhaps further down the line.

**Geraint Rees:** I think that you as a governing body needs to cross these bridges if and when they happen. It wouldn't be appropriate for the authority to set out expectations at this point in respect of something which the school itself will need to develop, and in respect of something which might not be a difficulty.

We are in a situation where Penweddig offers some subjects in the English language. I also understand that some Gwynedd schools teach some subjects through the medium of English even though they are Welsh-medium schools.

The aim of the authority is that all children in Bro Hyddgen grow to use both the English and Welsh languages with confidence and without fear, which could include teaching some subjects through the medium of English, although the school would still be regarded as Welsh-medium

**Cllr Elwyn Vaughan:** In Ysgol y Preseli, Crymych, for a number of years maths and sciences were being taught in English, and it was only fairly recently that they changed to teach these subjects through the medium of Welsh. Therefore, there is no need to be too worried.

**Geraint Rees:** And I'm sure if this matter was raised 20 years ago at Ysgol y Preseli people would have been worried.

We also need to consider the need for Welsh language teachers to be able to teach science subjects through the medium of Welsh, so there is a need to be practical in

relation to this point, although the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol will help to alleviate shortage in the future.

**Huw Foster Evans:** I agree with what has been said, but it is of course a matter for the governing body to decide. I do understand the concerns here, but we need to allay those concerns. Maths is no more difficult if taught through the medium of Welsh than it is through the medium of English, nor is any other subject.

**Governor:** What kind of immersion provision will there be so as to ensure that immersion is available to latecomers to the area? There was an immersion project a few years ago. We had two pupils here starting in year 7 with no Welsh whatsoever and they progressed through the school via the Welsh-medium stream, very successfully. We need funds in place in order to ensure that immersion is available. In the past Powys has promised funding but promises have been broken.

**Geraint Rees:** Immersion is absolutely crucial to this project. This proposal is only realistic if there are proper immersion facilities. There are models of immersion units in Wales which shows that immersion can work.

In the past the school may have felt let down because of promises by the local authority which were not kept. We're now taking a longer term view, so the resources are more secure, as currently the distribution of resources are so wide and the margins so small, but that will change so that we can ensure that promises made are kept.

This isn't a flash in the pan project. This is an area where there will always latecomers moving in. COVID might encourage more of a move from towns to rural areas like Powys, and therefore we have to make sure that immersion works.

**Mari Thomas:** There has been a change over the last year, year and a half as to how education is proceeding in Powys. There has been a lack of resources, and difficult decisions have had to be made in the past. However, there is commitment to the new Powys Education Strategy and the whole Council must support it.

**Geraint Rees:** To commit to a new school in Machynlleth at a cost of over £40m, and not to give it the support it needs to succeed would be nonsensical. This project needs to succeed and would be a flagship project of the local authority

**Sarah Astley:** Introducing immersion is one of the objectives of the new education strategy. Therefore, there is certainly an intention by Powys to improve the immersion provision in the county which is available to latecomers. As it happens a new pilot immersion scheme has commenced this week. It's taking place on-line due to COVID, but it is something that can be developed, and a first step along the journey and we would like to work with you as a governing body in relation to this.



**Headmaster:** I would ask that you locate any new immersion centre in Machynlleth. That would be a great help, and would alleviate the concerns of the local community.

**Geraint Rees:** That is the challenge the authority has set itself.

**Governor:** As far as teaching sciences through the medium of Welsh is concerned, there are specific case studies I have seen of pupils who have had Welsh-medium education but who have then found work, usually in England, and also elsewhere, and perhaps they could be of interest, as far as showing what is possible as this proposal proceeds.

**Geraint Rees:** I studied through the medium of Welsh until sixth form and then studied in a University in England, and had no problems with the language. As part of the marketing process we need to have specific examples, of children who succeed at age 16 and 18 having had a Welsh-medium education.

**Deputy Headteacher:** As part of the marketing process we need to market the fact that we give an additional skill to every pupil, whatever their ability, and it offers them access to jobs that similarly able pupils would not get, because they have this additional skill. It's very important to market the opportunities available in Wales through the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, but pupils are also available to study elsewhere. For example our Head girl last year decided to go to Goldsmiths in London to study and rejected Oxford. Therefore, we have excellent examples in the school itself, and we don't always need to find examples from elsewhere of successful children.

**Geraint Rees:** The role of a school is not to export children to the world, but to enable pupils to achieve what they want, be it locally or further afield. There is a problem in rural Wales with recruiting people with Welsh language skills to a variety of types of employment.

**Deputy Headteacher:** It's important that the school and the authority fully support non-Welsh speaking children, those that arrive in the school in Reception class and that we commit fully to teach them through the medium of Welsh not just at the beginning but through their journey through the school.

**Governor:** It's important that children that receive immersion do so in a small class. That appeals to parents.

**Deputy Headteacher:** If we can show that we can fully support children at Bro Hyddgen, then we are far more likely to see them stay at Bro Hyddgen and not leave for other schools.

**Geraint Rees:** We need to normalise the Welsh language as a medium of education which opens the door to natural bilingualism, and only by doing it can that happen. We can philosophise about this but it is something which we need to be implemented

on a practical basis. If the proposal is implemented then it is a challenge for you as a school community to ensure that it is implemented well.

**Cllr Elwyn Vaughan:** I agree that immersion is essential and I have heard good reports about Llanfyllin. Therefore, if we can learn from that, all the better.

Thank you everyone for attending tonight. Good night.

### **3. Meeting with the School Council of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen – Primary Phase**

#### **A meeting with the School Council of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen – Primary Phase**

13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – Held virtually on Microsoft Teams

**Present:** Huw Foster-Evans, Sarah Astley, Huw Rowlands – Powys County Council  
Dafydd Jones, Haf ap Robert – Ysgol Bro Hyddgen

Officers from Powys County Council met virtually via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the School Council of the Primary Phase of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen to discuss the consultation to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen from dual-stream to Welsh-medium.

The session was held with 3 pupils from the school council. The group were all in years 4 – 6.

The officers explained the proposals for changing the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, and that they would like to have the views of the pupils on the proposal. The pupils understood that the change would be phased over time and that the proposal would have no effect on existing pupils.

The pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below:

#### **What would be the advantages of the proposal?**

- Lots of good things but also some bad things. If all pupils were taught in Welsh, children would have more opportunities and jobs in Wales, and they would have a better understanding of Wales and its history
- Enjoy learning through the medium of Welsh
- More people in the Machynlleth area would speak Welsh

#### **What would be the disadvantages of the proposal?**

- It might be hard for the Yr1 - Yr6 English-stream pupils to get used to the change
- The school might lose some pupils as they could move to another school which has an English-stream
- Incomers moving to the area with no knowledge of Welsh might find it difficult to learn a new language

#### **Other questions asked:**

- What about staff who don't speak Welsh, will they have to learn Welsh before being able to teach at the school if the language was changed to Welsh-

medium? – It was explained that the Council would need to help the school to provide opportunities for teachers and other staff to learn Welsh.

- What happens if a non Welsh speaker comes to YBH in a few years' time. How would you help them understand Welsh? – It was explained that there would be immersion opportunities available for pupils, so pupils would have the chance to join an intensive Welsh course when they start at the school. This currently happens all over Wales, and we need to make sure that these opportunities are available for any children who don't speak Welsh that come to Ysgol Bro Hyddgen.

We need to make sure that these opportunities are available to anyone that doesn't speak Welsh that moves to the primary or secondary phase of the school.

#### **Other comments:**

- I didn't find it difficult to learn in Welsh, my grandmother speaks Welsh and English and she helped me to speak Welsh. I wasn't worried about learning in Welsh, I was happy to be educated in Welsh even though both my parents spoke English.
- I speak English at home but I started learning Welsh at a young age with others speaking Welsh with me.

The pupils were thanked for their attendance, and were told if they or their friends did think of anything else, they were welcome to let the School Transformation Team know, and how to do this was explained.

#### **4. Meeting with the School Council of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen – Secondary Phase**

##### **A meeting with the School Council of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen – Secondary Phase**

13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – Held virtually on Microsoft Teams

**Present:** Huw Foster-Evans, Sarah Astley, Huw Rowlands – Powys County Council  
Dafydd Jones, Anwen Pughe-Jones – Ysgol Bro Hyddgen

Officers from Powys County Council met virtually via Microsoft Teams with representatives from the School Council of the Secondary Phase of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen to discuss the consultation to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen from dual-stream to Welsh-medium.

The session was held with 12 pupils from the Secondary Phase School Council of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen. The group comprised of pupils in years 7 – 13.

The officers explained the proposals for changing the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen, and that they would like to have the views of the pupils on the proposal. The pupils understood that the change would be phased over time and that the proposal would have no effect on existing pupils.

The pupils were asked several questions and their responses are summarised below:

##### **What would be the advantages of the proposal?**

- It would be a good idea, it's so important for children to be bilingual. It would be good for the Welsh language. It's a good idea to have children learning Welsh from an early age.
- I agree with the proposal, it's a fantastic idea. I think it had to happen. It is generally a good thing to make the change gradually over a number of years.
- I think that it's a good idea to have more Welsh in the school
- Having been through a Welsh-medium primary school where everything was in Welsh, I feel that Welsh-medium education from an early age is a really good idea. At that young age you don't realise how important the Welsh language is, and for those with parents that don't speak Welsh, perhaps they don't realise how important it is to learn the Welsh language fluently until they are older. Once they reach secondary school, it is far more difficult for them to learn Welsh fluently. Therefore it is far easier to learn from an early age.
- I think that we should have a Welsh school as Bro Ddyfi is a Welsh area, and people who are bilingual have better thinking skills. For example, they can concentrate better and have improved memory, and they can have better job opportunities in the future.

- I think that it's good that it's starting at a young age, as it's easier to learn languages when young, and it'll be picked up quicker.
- It's beneficial to be bilingual, and it would be good for others to have the same opportunities I had.

### **What would be the disadvantages of the proposal?**

- If people move to the area who do not speak Welsh they will find it very hard. Some people who have joined my year in high school have found it hard. I feel that needs to be something which allows them to have space so they can pick it up.
- I think it's a good idea from a young age, but it's for parents to decide whether or not they want their children to go to English stream or Welsh stream, and if there were students moving from Birmingham or a place in England at a later stage, it would be very hard for them to move to a full Welsh school. Therefore it could make things harder for a lot of students.
- A lot of my friends are worried about the change to a Welsh-medium school.
- Concern that it might be difficult to find Welsh speaking teachers for some niche subjects e.g. business studies, and that this would limit the range of subjects available.

### **Other comments / queries**

- It will take a long time to implement across the whole school, over 10 years. Is there a way to do it quicker? – It was explained that the change had been planned so that it wouldn't affect children attending Ysgol Bro Hyddgen at this moment in time – pupils attending the school now won't have to make a change, only those pupils attending the school in the future.
- What about years 10 to 13, which are important years, with exams being sat. Would it be possible to do subjects in Welsh or English? Studying A levels in English would be easier for pupils going to study in English at University, For GCSE and A level, sometimes I find that some subjects are easier in English – This concern was noted, however it was explained that in Welsh-medium schools across Wales, all of the learners studied all subjects through the medium of Welsh up until A levels. Many of these go on to attend university in England.
- Pupils who cannot speak Welsh will need additional support. For example, my Welsh teacher gave me additional support and this helped me a lot – It was agreed that additional support would be needed to support learners alongside any change. There are many examples of good practice across Wales, and the staff at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen will already be aware of good practice and will be experienced in supporting pupils.
- Will there be support for non-Welsh speaking families? – It was explained that it's important that support is there for pupils' families as well as the pupils themselves, for example Welsh lessons for parents, and ensuring that

homework resources and school information are available in both Welsh and English so that parents do not feel that they don't understand or are losing out.

The pupils were thanked for their attendance, and were told that the consultation period ends on 26<sup>th</sup> January. Information regarding the consultation and how to respond is available on the Powys County Council website.

The next steps in the consultation process were also explained, and a final decision was expected by the end of the 2021 academic year.